

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

BUILDING CONTROL



ROOFSPACE CONVERSIONS

GUIDANCE NOTE 3

Roofspace Conversions

This guidance note is generally applicable to the conversion of a roofspace in a two-storey private dwelling-house where additional fire protection measures are particularly important. There may be varied or additional provisions applicable to other roofspace conversions and these should be discussed with Building Control.

Roofspace or attic conversions require a Building Regulation application i.e. a Full Plans application or Building Notice submission, where the intention is to provide:

- an extra bedroom
- a bathroom or en suite
- a playroom
- a study/office

A roof space or loft may be used to store lightweight items such as suitcases, festive decorations etc., a Building Regulation application is not required provided the access to the area is by loft hatch/ladder and not by a new staircase.

Ceiling joists are generally not intended to act as a floor and are not designed to support heavy loads. Therefore it is important to inform the Building Control service and make a Building Regulations application where the proposed use is for anything other than occasional light storage.

WHY INFORM THE BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

Building Control will help achieve the construction standards set out in The Building Regulations. Future sales of properties where work has been completed without Building Regulation approval can be difficult.

It is generally considered that roof conversions are the most complex of domestic building work. They should be designed and constructed by people aware of the health and safety aspects affecting building occupiers.

The following points must be considered and catered for in roofspace conversions:

1. The new floor and room layout requires a safe and easy exit route in the event of fire. Careful consideration of this item is of critical importance.
2. The provision of a fully protected escape route to a final exit (a protected stairway) is an important aspect of life safety. The enclosure around a protected stairway from the new floor down to a final exit requires to achieve 30 minutes fire resisting construction (walls and doors).
3. Existing doors around the stairway enclosure may be capable of being upgraded to a fire resisting standard, but replacement with proprietary fire doors will be required in most cases.
4. Where an 'open-plan' arrangement exists on the ground floor, a roofspace conversion may not be possible unless additional fire separation, and life safety measures can be included in the design. In such circumstances you are advised to discuss options with Building Control.
5. The provision of a mains operated smoke alarm system to give early warning of a fire is necessary. In some situations additional heat detection and alarm may be required.
6. The structural adequacy of the "new floor" and roof has to be designed and checked to ensure it can safely support the new loads placed upon it, without suffering collapse or excessive deflection.
7. Thermal insulation
8. Electrical installations need to be either, installed by a Registered Part P Electrician, or inspected and tested by a building control body.

9. Ventilation is essential to most room areas to prevent unpleasant living conditions.
10. Condensation, if not properly catered for especially in areas where it cannot be seen, can cause problems. Certain roofspace layouts and roof construction types require careful consideration of ventilation and vapour check barrier provisions.
11. The walls and roof of the roofspace conversion require not only to keep out the rain and effects of damp but also reduce heat loss
12. If a bathroom or shower room is to be included additional ventilation measures will be required to prevent excessive condensation.

OTHER APPROVALS

In addition to a Building Regulation approval you may also require Planning Permission in certain circumstances. Please contact the Planning Customer Services Officer on 01327 322132 for assistance in this respect.

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